DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 117 126 TM 004 978

AUTHOR	Kupersmith, Gerrie
TITLE	High Impact Anti-Crime Program: A Framework for Assessing Project-Level Evaluation Plans.
INSTITUTION	Mitre Corp., McLean, Va.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (Dept. of Justice/LEAA), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jun 75
NOTE	18p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (Stock No. 027-000-00327-3, $0.45)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	*Crime; Data Analysis; Data Collection; *Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Needs; Law Enforcement; Models; Program Design; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; *Program Evaluation; *Program Planning

ABSTRACT

The pamphlet describes an evaluation model for crime reduction projects developed by National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice sponsored research. It is meant to assist justice agency and project managers in determining completeness of evaluation planning by providing a framework against which to measure their evaluation components. While the model and review criteria presented were developed within the context of the Legal Enforcement Assistance Administration's (LEAA's) High Impact Anti-Crime Program, they were based upon an awareness of the difficulties involved in evaluating social programs generally and may be applicable to evaluation efforts outside of the criminal justice sector. The paper is divided into four sections. The first (introductory) section describes current preoccupations with evaluation. The second section provides the reader with an understanding of the special context within which the model and criteria were developed via a brief discussion of the Impact Program's evaluation effort. The third section presents the evaluation planning model along with a discussion of key steps in the evaluation planning process. The fourth section elaborates general guidelines regarding the use and applicability of the model and review criteria, and develops a set of questions which need to be addressed during the review of a project-level evaluation plan or component. (Author/BJG)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

high impact anti-crime program

A Framework for Assessing Project-Level Evaluation Plans

By

GERRIE KUPERSMITH

ED111120

TM 004 970

This project was supported by Contract Number F 19628-73-C-001 awarded to The Mitre Corporation by the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, U. S. Department of Justice, under the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U. S. Department of Justice.

June 1975

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

LAW ENFORCEMENT ASSISTANCE ADMINISTRATION

Richard W. Velde, *Administrator*
Charles R. Work, *Deputy Administrator*

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Gerald M. Caplan, *Director*

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Kupersmith, Gerrie.
A framework for assessing project-level evaluation plans.

"Prepared by the MITRE Corporation in conjunction with the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice as part of the national level evaluation of the High Impact Anti-crime Program."

1. Crime prevention—Evaluation. 2. Evaluation. 2. Evaluation research (Social action programs) I. Mitre Corporation. II. National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. III. Title.

HV7431.K85 364.4'028 75-619212

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price .45 cents
Stock Number 027-000-00327-3

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
FOREWORD	v
PREFACE	vii
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
2.0 EVALUATION IN THE IMPACT PROGRAM	2
3.0 A PROJECT-LEVEL EVALUATION PLANNING MODEL FOR THE IMPACT PROGRAM	3
3.1 The Evaluation Planning Process	3
3.2 Project Objectives	4
3.3 Measures	5
3.4 Evaluation Research Design/Methodology	7
3.5 Data Collection Plan	8
3.6 Project Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting	9
4.0 REVIEW OF EVALUATION PLANS	10
4.1 A Note on Assessing Evaluation Plans	10
4.2 Evaluation Review Questions	10
4.3 Use of Review Questions	12

FOREWORD

Evaluating social programs is a difficult task. Given the unknowns in the social science field and the modesty of the evaluation tools currently at our disposal, answers often are beyond reach. This is especially true in criminal justice, a field in which the kind of planning and data gathering necessary for evaluation has only recently begun.

Despite these obstacles, evaluation of the impact of LEAA-funded programs is essential. The National Institute is giving high priority to this task and to building state and local evaluation capabilities.

The pamphlet describes an evaluation model for crime reduction projects developed by National Institute sponsored research. It is being distributed to assist criminal justice agency and project managers in determining the completeness of evaluation planning by providing a framework against which to measure their evaluation components.

Gerald M. Caplan,
Director
National Institute of Law
Enforcement and Criminal Justice

PREFACE

As part of the national level evaluation of the LEAA's High Impact Anti-Crime Program, The MITRE Corporation and the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice have taken the opportunity provided by the large-scale implementation and evaluation of crime reduction projects in the eight Impact cities to examine the process and techniques of project-level evaluation.

A major area of inquiry for the national level evaluation is the planning phase in the evaluative process. Evaluation planning is therefore being assessed in each of the Impact cities in terms of the organizational placement of evaluation responsibility, the completeness and adequacy of project-level evaluation plans (components), and the composition of staffs assembled to implement these plans. The importance of the role played by Impact project evaluation components led to the development of a model and of review criteria for assessing them which are presented here in the belief that they can usefully serve practitioners and reviewers in the field.

The model and criteria presented herein have evolved slowly over the course of the Impact Program. The insights gained from the review of the many evaluation plans developed by city and project evaluators have been invaluable in this effort.

The following paper is divided into four sections. The first (introductory) section describes current preoccupations with evaluation. The second section provides the reader with an understanding of the special context within which the model and criteria were developed via a brief discussion of the Impact Program's evaluation effort. The third section presents the evaluation planning model along with a discussion of key steps in the evaluation planning process. The fourth section elaborates general guidelines regarding the use and applicability of the model and review criteria, and develops a set of questions which need to be addressed during the review of a project-level evaluation plan or component.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The responsibility for providing certain social services has shifted over the last several decades from the domain of families, neighborhoods, and employers to the public sector. This shift has been accompanied by large outlays of federal monies to finance both an increase in existing services and a wide range of new services in an effort to address perceived social problems.

The fact that these social problems persist despite these efforts and large expenditures is a continuing source of frustration for the policy-maker and citizen alike. Programs believed to be bold and innovative solutions to social problems have often failed to achieve what was expected of them. While expectations were sometimes unrealistic, serious questions have nonetheless been raised about the process of program selection and assessment and the adequacy of programmatic information available to guide this process.

In response to these questions and to the information gaps which they represent, demands have increasingly been made upon evaluation as a likely source for more data on the costs and benefits of social programs. Evaluation in this context is a process of accounting for the expenditure of funds by examining what happens to a specific problem when money is expended and services delivered to address that problem. Whereas previous accountability efforts focused upon how monies were spent or whether services were delivered, the question now being posed targets the effect such expenditures and services have on the problems they are designed to address.

Experience shows that the answers to these questions do not come easily. To date, there have been serious weaknesses in the range and quality of evaluative information generally produced. These weaknesses may be partly attributed to the newness of the effort and to the frequently post-hoc nature of many evaluations. To insure the collection of data needed to assess program activities and outcomes adequately, evaluation plans must be developed *prior* to program implementation. Where these plans are either absent or unsatisfactory, the chances for obtaining useful evaluative information appear to be greatly decreased.

This paper is designed to help practitioners and policy-makers increase their chances for obtaining useful evaluative information by providing a model and a set of criteria for reviewing project-level evaluation plans. While the model and review criteria presented in this document were developed within the context of the LEAA's High Impact Anti-Crime Program, they were based upon an awareness of the difficulties involved in evaluating social programs generally. The model and criteria thus evolved, not from a special consideration of criminal justice programs, but rather from a broader perspective which addresses measurement problems in a dynamic environment. It seems likely, therefore, that the model and review criteria may be applicable, as well, to evaluation efforts outside the criminal justice sector.

2.0 EVALUATION IN THE IMPACT PROGRAM

The Impact Program, launched by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) in 1972, was designed to address the problem of street-crime and burglary in eight major U.S. cities; Impact, from the outset, had a service, demonstration, and accountability orientation. It was designed to reduce crime through the provision of services, demonstrate the utility of crime-oriented planning as a rational way to select these services, and implement program-wide evaluation as a means for assessing the extent to which these services actually improved targeted crime problems in the eight Impact cities.

Evaluation has been incorporated into the Impact Program at three different levels. The broadest level addresses the degree of Impact crime reduction. Data with which to answer this question are to be provided by a series of victimization surveys administered with the support of the Bureau of the Census.

Evaluation will also take place at the national level and at the city level. At the national level, evaluation is designed to assess various facets of the Impact Program across the eight cities. This effort includes an examination of the planning, implementation, and evaluation activities of these cities as well as an overall assessment of program strengths and weaknesses. City-level evaluation will include project-specific evaluations as well as a city-wide assessment of the effectiveness of broad strategies selected by each city to address their crime problems. Project evaluation efforts are designed to provide information about the activities and outcomes of specific anti-crime tactics. Here city evaluators are responsible for determining the extent to which crime problems targeted by a specific project improve in the manner originally anticipated.

The importance of project-level evaluations in the Impact Program cannot be overemphasized. These evaluations provide information needed to assist decision-makers in allocating limited resources, to identify project operational areas in need of improvement, and to contribute to the body of knowledge essential for effective planning and problem-solving. The importance of project-level evaluations is reflected in the LEAA requirement that each Impact-funded project be evaluated during the course of project operations. To insure the fulfillment of this requirement, the LEAA initially urged the development of project-specific evaluation plans (components) prior to project implementation. This latter requirement provided the impetus for developing the evaluation planning process model and review criteria presented in the remaining sections of this document.

3.0 A PROJECT-LEVEL EVALUATION PLANNING MODEL FOR THE IMPACT PROGRAM

Project-level evaluation components were intended to serve as "blueprints" for subsequent project evaluations. The LEAA expected these components to provide the foundation for evaluation by furnishing:

(a) a delineation of project objectives;
(b) evaluation measures;
(c) data requirements;
(d) a data collection approach;
(e) a data analysis approach; and
(f) an evaluation reporting schedule.

While an assessment of project-level evaluation components in the Impact Program must therefore revolve around the six elements specified by LEAA, these elements are nonetheless insufficient in themselves for an adequate pre-evaluation design.[1] Although they do define the skeleton of an evaluation component, they reveal little about the quality of that structure. Moving beyond these basic structural elements requires an understanding of the purpose of the structure and the role it plays in the evaluation process.

As previously mentioned, an evaluation component is needed to provide the basic blueprint for subsequent project evaluations. That is, it should serve as a vehicle for defining, collecting and analyzing the data needed to assess the value of a particular anti-crime effort in terms of its stated aims. Such value may be gauged by addressing three basic questions:

(a) Did the project actually implement the activities/deliver the services which were specified in the grant application?
(b) Did the crime levels that the project was designed to reduce actually decline?
(c) Is it reasonable to attribute such improvement to the project's activities?

If one accepts these three questions as legitimate foci for an evaluation effort, it is then reasonable to assess evaluation plans in terms of their anticipated ability to insure the collection and analysis of the information needed to answer these questions. It is in this context that the following model and review criteria have been developed.

3.1 The Evaluation Planning Process

The real starting point in the evaluation planning process (depicted in Figure 1, see Page 4) is the identification of a specific crime problem. The nature and extent of this problem drive the remaining steps in the process. Project activities develop from the need to implement a particular anti-crime strategy believed to combat the pre-identified crime problem. These activities must therefore be logically linked to project outcome goals and objectives which, in turn, reflect the desired changes in the identified crime problem. The remaining interdependent steps in the evaluation planning process, from the delineation of activity, intermediate, and outcome objec-

[1] National Institute Memorandum, Guidelines for Regional Office Review of Evaluation Components of Impact City Project Proposals, 23 February 1973.

tives through the specification of measures, data collection and analysis procedures, constitute the basic foundation for assembling evidence to support subsequent inferences about linkages among project activities and outcomes.

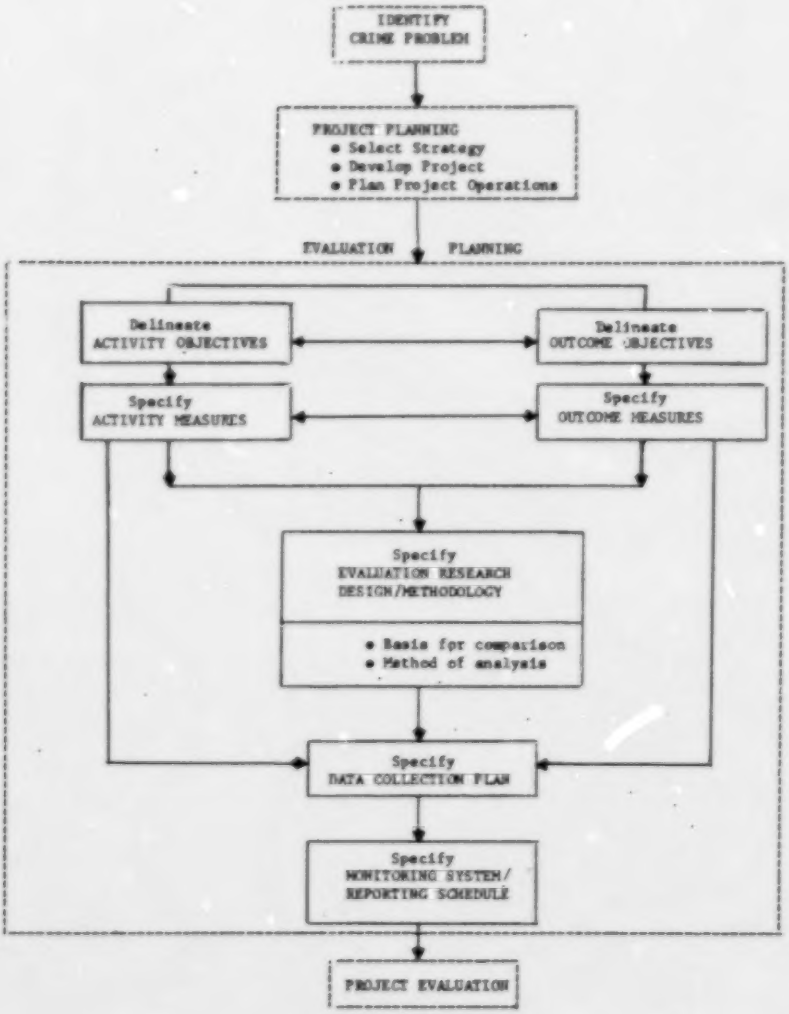

Figure 1. *A model depicting key steps in the project-level evaluation planning process.*

3.2 Project Objectives

An important step in the project-level evaluation planning process involves determining what the project expects to accomplish not only in terms of its effectiveness, or outcomes, but also in terms of its activities. Activity

objectives specify the type, range, and amount of services to be delivered, the target area/target population which will receive these services, and the manner in which these services are to be delivered. Outcome objectives indicate the kind and extent of improvement anticipated vis-a-vis the identified crime problem. Additionally, these objectives need to specify in quantitative terms the precise level of improvement expected, as well as the amount of time deemed necessary to achieve the outcome objectives.

In some instances, however, the real improvements or ultimate outcomes the project is designed to produce may not be measurable on a short-term basis. For example, a project targeting recidivism may seek to reduce the recidivism rates of serious, adult offenders by providing intensive counseling and educational services in a community-based treatment facility. Since the target population is physically confined during the period of project treatment, and hardly in a position to recidivate, it may take several years to determine the extent to which the project has met its primary outcome objective—recidivism reduction among serious, adult offenders. In the interim, information will be needed which allows evaluators and decision-makers to gauge how well the project is progressing in terms of its stated aims. To provide this information, intermediate objectives which are presumably linked to the ultimate desired outcomes need to be formulated. These objectives specify a set of outcomes which are assumed to facilitate or reflect the achievement of the desired long-term improvements in the targeted problem.

In the earlier example of the recidivism reduction project, improvements in client educational achievement levels or client feelings of self esteem might be used as intermediate project objectives. The expectation or assumption here is that a client's level of educational achievement and/or feelings of self esteem will be important determinants of future involvement in criminal behavior. Assuming this to be a reasonable expectation, attainment of these intermediate objectives provides a basis for determining how well the project is progressing towards its ultimate outcome objective.

Unfortunately, there is often little evidence about presumed linkages among activity, intermediate, and outcome objectives. The most reasonable approach, given the need for timely evaluative information and existing knowledge gaps, is therefore to delineate the most logical set of activity, intermediate, and outcome objectives, keeping in mind the tentative nature of the linkages among them. When these objectives are in fact logically linked together they provide a coherent conceptual framework for the development of internally consistent evaluation methods, instruments, and tools. This internal consistency and the confidence it generates in the method of evaluation helps the evaluator to better assess the soundness of the assumptions underlying the project's objectives as well as the extent to which these objectives are being met.

3.3 Measures

After delineating activity, intermediate and outcome objectives, valid measures are developed for use in the project evaluation. Measures bridge the gap between an objective and the data required to assess whether or not that specific objective has been met. That is, they define the observable

behaviors or criteria which ultimately serve as the basic body of evidence underlying conclusions or inferences about project/objective attainment.

Bridging such a gap requires translating key aspects and dimensions of the project into criteria which are not only measurable, but demonstrably valid in that they effectively measure achievement of project objectives. The basic ideas of the project, its aims, and important side-effects (such as crime displacement) need to be captured and accounted for in the proposed measures in order that a comprehensive assessment of project achievements can take place. These measures must thus be valid indicators of the concepts, aims, and side-effects they are designed to reflect, and the key question here is whether the proposed measures really measure what they are intended to measure.

Measures must also be operationally defined in the evaluation plan. These operational definitions specify the set of conditions or events which signal the presence or absence of the activity or outcome being measured. For example, educational achievement is frequently used as a measure or indicant of social adjustment in rehabilitation projects targeting juvenile offenders. Assuming this to be a valid measure, how does the evaluator know which juveniles are in fact increasing their level of educational achievement? What is needed is an operational definition of educational achievement which specifies those behaviors, activities, or events which allow the evaluator to clearly discriminate achievement levels among juveniles. In this case, the successful completion of course work, passing grades, or grade-level promotions might be among the behaviors or events used to operationally define educational achievement, thus providing the evaluator with a more precise basis for measuring one type of improvement in the level of social adjustment among juvenile offenders.

Also of importance is the sensitivity of the evaluation measures and their corresponding operational definitions. Proposed measures may be too crude to reveal the nature and extent of changes which the project may create both in terms of its activities and outcomes. That is, the specified unit of measure must be able to reflect changes which may be occurring relative to the targeted problem. In the earlier example of educational achievement among juvenile offenders, the use of grade-level promotions or graduations from high school to differentiate achievers from non-achievers may result in misleading conclusions about project outcomes. These two measures are, in a sense, too gross to reveal important changes which may be occurring among project clients. For those juveniles who had rarely completed or passed a course prior to project participation, the successful completion of several courses would certainly indicate an increased level of educational achievement. If, however, the evaluator relies strictly on grade promotions or high school graduations as unique indicants of educational achievement, these improvements might easily go unnoticed.

Thus, the validity of the proposed measures and the sensitivity of their corresponding operational definitions are critical to the evaluation effort. In concert, they allow the evaluator to assemble evidence to support conclusions about the extent to which project objectives have been met.

3.4 Evaluation Research Design/Methodology

Once measures have been defined, an evaluation research design needs to be developed to provide a method for identifying changes in the targeted problem and, at the same time, allow the evaluator to determine whether these observed changes in outcome measures can reasonably be attributed to the project's activities rather than to other external factors or to chance.

In order to identify changes or differences in the targeted problem, some basis for comparison is essential. Ideally, the evaluator would like to use outcome measures taken from a randomly selected control area/group during the period of project operations as the basis for comparison. This type of comparison guarantees that the effects of outside influences will not systematically bias observed changes in outcome measures. In the case of a project designed to reduce recidivism among juvenile offenders, for example, the random assignment of offenders to the project treatment group and to a non-treatment (control) group allows the evaluator to assume that factors which may affect recidivism rates, such as client criminal history or age, will not systematically bias the recidivism rates observed in either the treatment or control groups. In the absence of systematic biases in observed outcomes, the evaluator is in a better position to say that observed differences in recidivism rates between treatment and non-treatment groups are attributable to the project's activities.

When control through randomization is not feasible, other approaches must be used to examine the relative impact of the project and of other influences upon the observed changes in the measures. Control through the use of comparison areas/groups matched to the targeted area/group on the basis of selected characteristics is one alternative, as is the use of statistical techniques which may factor out estimated influences which are expected to affect outcome measures during the project period. When these alternatives are used, the validity of the findings obtained will be directly related to the evaluator's ability to identify and discriminate among those characteristics or factors unrelated to project activities which may influence the outcome measures being examined. For example, when juvenile offenders are not randomly assigned to project treatment and non-treatment groups, the evaluator may attempt to identify a set of characteristics, such as age, criminal history, educational level, which are assumed to affect recidivism levels in the treatment group. These characteristics would then guide the selection or identification of another group of juvenile offenders whose recidivism levels during the period of project operations would be compared to those observed in the project treatment group. Differences in recidivism levels observed among these two groups cannot be blindly accepted, however, as estimates of project effects. Rather, it must be recognized that the degree of correspondence between observed differences and project impact depends upon the validity of the assumptions made in selecting the set of characteristics used to develop the comparison group. Thus, the extent to which the evaluator can identify significant characteristics or factors greatly affects the degree to which observed changes are indeed attributable to project activities.

The evaluator's ability to do so is likely to be rather modest, however, given the limited state of knowledge about the dynamics of complex social

problems such as crime. This knowledge, nonetheless, provides a basis for examining the validity of assumptions underlying the selection and use of a particular basis of comparison in the evaluation effort.

3.5 Data Collection Plan

Project objectives, measures, and the research design together make data collection a meaningful operation: they define the kinds of data which are needed and the manner in which they will subsequently be aggregated and analyzed to provide information about project activities and outcomes. Without reliable data, the evaluation plan is like a recipe which has either not been tried because the ingredients are unavailable or has proved unsuccessful because the ingredients used were of low quality or were questionable substitutions. Developing a mechanism for obtaining reliable data is therefore a vital step in the evaluation planning process.

Basically two types of data are needed for the evaluation effort. The first includes those data elements needed to construct project activity and outcome measures. These data elements, previously identified in the process of specifying evaluation measures, form the basis for making conclusions about the extent to which project objectives have been met. The second type consists of those data elements needed to implement the control feature of the research design (that is, data on selected characteristics or factors which will be controlled for through either a matching process or some method of analysis). These data elements, identified in the process of selecting a basis for comparison, are crucial to the evaluator's efforts to determine whether observed changes in outcome measures can reasonably be attributed to the project's activities. In conjunction with one another, these two types of data provide the raw ingredients needed to assess project impact on the targeted problem.

3.5.1 Data sources. Developing a data collection approach involves identifying potential data sources, constructing data collection instruments, and in some cases, specifying the sampling approach and the population from which data will be collected. The early identification of data sources provides the opportunity to gauge whether or not the data elements needed to develop the measures and implement the research design will in fact be available. When data gaps are identified at an early stage in the process, necessary modifications in the evaluation plan can be made prior to its full implementation. This helps to insure that the subsequent collection of data will be useful and will result in a proper execution of the evaluation design.

3.5.2 Data forms. Data collection instruments are constructed to provide a method for recording and categorizing needed data. Ultimately, the data collected are only as good as the manner in which they are recorded. Where data are categorized in a fashion which makes it impossible to differentiate client sub-group populations or different types of project activities, useful information may be hopelessly lost. It is thus important to develop data collection procedures and forms which specify categories that are mutually exclusive. Additionally, data collection procedures and forms should clearly correspond to the range and level of data required for the

evaluation effort. If information is needed at a client-specific level, data forms which encourage the recording of strictly aggregate, group data are clearly inadequate. Similarly, if information on client socio-economic background is needed, provisions should be made so that this information is recorded on the data collection forms.

When it is infeasible to collect data from the entire population of interest, plans for evaluation may include the collection of data from a sample or sub-group of the population. Here, the criteria guiding the selection of the sample and the size of the sample which is to be used must be carefully considered in terms of their ability to generate an unbiased, representative sample. For example, a project targeting burglary problems in a high crime area may seek to increase community awareness of the importance of preventive devices such as locks and burglary alarms. In this case, the evaluation plan may include the collection of attitude data from a sample of high crime area residents. In order to get a fair reading of citizen attitudes towards preventive devices the evaluator must select the sample in such a way that the information collected is representative of the population of interest; in this case, high crime area residents. Additionally, the sample must be large enough to justify making conclusions about the population as a whole. Biases or lack of representation can most easily be avoided by randomly selecting the sample. Other approaches, such as a stratified sampling approach, are acceptable when the criteria or characteristics used to stratify the sample appear to be reasonable.

To further insure the collection of needed data, responsibilities for data collection and validation must be clearly specified prior to the implementation of the evaluation plan. Too often, confusion over data collection responsibilities has resulted in a failure to collect data essential for the evaluation effort. Similarly, failure to check data for inconsistencies in the recording of information have thwarted an otherwise well-designed evaluation effort. Thus, the data collection approach developed in the evaluation plan must include the specification of the data collection responsibilities and validation procedures, as well as the identification of the sources, instruments, and sample approach which will be used to collect needed data.

3.6 Project Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting

An evaluation plan must also specify a system for monitoring project activities and reporting project outcomes. Project monitoring during the life of the project provides a mechanism for identifying operational weaknesses which may ultimately affect project outcomes and/or preclude the collection of information needed for interim evaluation reports. These reports provide an important feedback mechanism which affords evaluators the opportunity to test their original evaluation plan and make modifications which will facilitate the subsequent production of information useful for decision-making purposes. To insure the existence of this self-correcting process, each evaluation plan should include a discussion of the monitoring system, and of the frequency with which evaluation reports will be written and disseminated.

4.0 REVIEW OF EVALUATION PLANS

4.1 A Note on Assessing Evaluation Plans

While the evaluation planning process has been discussed as a series of sequential activities, it should be kept in mind that these activities are really part of a complex, iterative process. Changes or modifications in any step in the process usually have an impact on the other steps. For example, a rescoping of project outcome objectives necessarily affects the applicability of previously defined measures and data collection strategies. Similarly, data constraints (encountered during or after the development of the evaluation plan) limit not only the type and range of measures which may be used, but also the type of evaluation design/methodology which is appropriate for linking project activities and outcomes. Thus, data considerations—like all of the activities in Figure 1 (Page 7) feed into the evaluative process in a cyclical way.

This interdependency means that the initial evaluation plan which is prepared and reviewed is rarely executed in its original form. For this reason, the use of the review questions presented below should likewise be viewed as an iterative process, to be repeated as modifications are required in the original evaluation plan. Further, while the model and review questions provide a viable method for assessing the adequacy of specific aspects of the evaluation plan, the overall logic of the plan and the extent to which elements are logically linked together are not specifically addressed. The logical consistency of the overall evaluation plan is therefore an additional and overriding issue which must be raised and addressed in light of the nature of the project, the limitations of the research context, and purpose of the evaluative effort.

4.2 Evaluation Review Questions

As indicated earlier, an evaluation plan provides the foundation for assembling information needed to assess linkages among project activities and outcomes. The soundness of this foundation can be assessed by reviewing each of its elements in terms of several basic questions. These questions, listed below, constitute the criteria developed to review project-level evaluation plans or components.

1. *Project Objectives*

   Questions to ask about project objectives when reviewing an evaluation plan include:

   (a) Are the basic ideas of the project adequately translated into measurable goals and objectives?

   (b) Are activity objectives delineated which specify:
   - type of services to be provided;
   - range or scope of services to be provided;
   - quantity of services to be provided; and
   - service recipients (e.g., target population, target area)?

   (c) Do the intermediate objectives which have been delineated specify:
   - kind and extent of improvement anticipated

- a quantified level of expected achievement
- the period of time deemed necessary to achieve objectives?

(d) Are outcome goals/objectives delineated which specify:
- the kind and extent of improvement anticipated vis-a-vis the identified crime problem;
- a quantified level of expected achievement, and
- the period of time deemed necessary to achieve goals/objectives?

(e) Are activity objectives, intermediate objectives, and outcome goals/objectives logically linked together?

(f) Are the activity, intermediate, and outcome objectives realistic in terms of expected levels of achievement?

2. *Evaluation Measures*

Questions to ask about evaluation measures when reviewing an evaluation plan include:

(a) Are the basic ideas of the program adequately translated into the proposed measures? In other words, are key aspects/dimensions of project goals/objectives tapped by the proposed measures? Are important side-effects (such as crime displacement or system changes) captured and accounted for?

(b) Do the proposed measures appear to be valid indicators of key project concepts and objectives? In other words, do the measures really measure what they are intended to measure?

(c) Are the measures adequately operationally defined?

(d) Are the proposed measures sensitive enough to show the nature and extent of changes which the project is expected to create both in terms of activities and outcomes? That is, can the specified unit of measure reveal changes which may be occurring in the targeted problem?

3. *Evaluation Research Design/Methodology*

Questions to ask about the evaluation research design/methodology when reviewing an evaluation plan include:

(a) Is some basis for comparison specified in the evaluation component?

(b) Is the basis for comparison sufficiently described to permit a critical assessment of its adequacy?

(c) Does the evaluation research design/methodology provide controls (either through the treatment assignment process or collection and analysis of data) for:
- selection biases;
- inappropriate treatment selection criteria;
- impact of natural phenomena (seasonal variation, maturation);
- impact of events outside the project which could blunt or exaggerate measures of project outcomes?

4. *Data Collection Plan*

Questions to ask about the data collection plan when reviewing an

evaluation plan include:

(a) Are mechanisms for collecting required data clearly specified in terms of:
- sampling approach;
- sample size;
- data collection forms;
- data sources;
- responsibility for data collection;
- procedures for data validation?

(b) Are the data collection forms adequate mechanisms for collecting the range and level of data required to implement the research/methodology?

5. *Evaluation Reporting Schedules*

Questions to ask about evaluation reporting schedules when reviewing an evaluation plan include:

(a) Is an evaluation reporting schedule included in the plan?

(b) Is the schedule reasonable in light of:
- project duration, and
- nature of project?

4.3 Use of Review Questions

The review questions presented above provide a method for systematically assessing project-level evaluation plans. By using these questions, missing elements in these plans can be quickly identified. Similarly, inadequacies in the substance of those elements addressed in the evaluation plan can be pinpointed vis a vis the review question procedure. Early identification of gaps and inadequacies allows the evaluator to make modifications which will facilitate the subsequent production of useful evaluative information.

☆ U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1975 O—589-408